

ON
THE DEFENCE
OF OUR
COLONIES AND COMMERCE.

LONDON:
WILLIAM RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY. W.
1865.

Admistr Lth. Elliott
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I BELIEVE that the most effective, and necessarily the most economical, military protection for the widely-separated dependencies of this Empire will be found to be identical with the most eligible means of providing for the security of the great courses of our foreign commerce. At all events all authorities, military or political, by whom the subject has been treated, have condemned the dispersion of the regular military force and resources of the Empire, and the multiplication of fixed works at the charge of the Imperial Treasury on grounds of local convenience.

It follows that, as a rule, there should be no Imperial military occupation in any outlying positions not falling strictly within the condition of points to be *held in strength and properly organised, according to some settled comprehensive policy, for the maintenance of our maritime ascendancy.* The security of the whole fabric of colonies and commerce depends on that condition, and with our great and constantly improving means of maritime transport, any remains of a disjointed military occupation can only be sustained as an exceptional measure to be carefully limited by the requirements of the case and to be abandoned as soon as circumstances permit.

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Whether the charge, in such exceptional instances, is to fall wholly or partially on the Imperial Treasury must also remain matter of special consideration according to the varying circumstances of each incident of the kind.

COLONIES CONSENTING TO RECEIVE CONVICTS.

Under the head of complete payment of the military charge by the Imperial Treasury, including transport both ways, would, of course, fall the case of colonies consenting to receive convicts from the mother country to be assigned in private labour, and gradually absorbed in the body of the free population as they should be released. Convenient as such a system might have been in several respects, both to the mother country and to the settlers in colonies of recent establishment in the temperate regions, there is little reason to believe that it will in future be consented to on such an extended scale or for such a length of time as would warrant the expence of barracks and other buildings, and remove all the other objections against dispersion of force in positions *not forming part of the regular military system of the Empire.*

The practice only obtains in one colony at present, and, I believe, to a small extent and diminishingly.

Beyond the case just considered, it seems difficult to understand that there can be any valid ground for casting the whole charge of transport and maintenance on the Imperial Treasury of any occupation

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by the Queen's forces which Her Majesty's Government may see fit to sanction from time to time for local convenience in colonies not having posts *which form part of the military system of the empire.*

COLONIES OF NEW SETTLEMENT.

The amount, the nature, and the duration of any military countenance to be afforded to colonies of recent settlement, having native tribes within their borders, and the share of the expence to devolve on the Imperial Treasury can, of course, only be determined by Her Majesty's Government.

But I believe in most, if not in all of these cases, that duty should be entrusted to the navy, the land part of the aid consisting of such additional strength of marines and marine artillery as the circumstances of the case may require. The Staff and supply arrangements of a force of that kind are much simpler and less expensive; and seamen and marines are, I think, better suited to the exigencies of marooning and desultory hostilities with savage or semi-civilized tribes, in regions without transport, roads, or shelter, than regular troops trained to meet the stress of scientific warfare in settled countries, and therefore perhaps less shifty, if I may use such an expression, than their maritime comrades.

When the population becomes dense enough and sees fit to push their settlements into the interior, the policy of such proceedings and the military protection which may be necessary, should, I think, be

left entirely to the *local Governments* and *levies*, aided by such supplies of arms, ammunition, and military stores, and guidance and co-operation of ships of war, as Her Majesty's Government may see fit to afford. Hostilities with native tribes, ordered by Her Majesty's Government, must, of course, be carried on and paid for by the Queen's authority ; but hostilities undertaken by the settlers and local Governments are subject to different consideration.

COLONIES FORMERLY CULTIVATED BY SLAVES.

The next category of colonies demanding some share of direct countenance by Imperial force is that in which there are a handful of British proprietors and traders, living for the most part isolatedly, surrounded by vastly preponderating numbers of people of a different race not long since emancipated from slavery, and in some of these colonies, amongst numbers of Asiatic immigrants under contracts of service. It may, no doubt, be said of both these classes of people that they are generally quiet and docile, and certainly that neither the one nor the other have the slightest cause of discontent against the Governments under which they live or against their employers. They are efficiently protected against abuse of any kind. It must also be acknowledged that in those colonies in which there is a mixture of Creole and Asiatic labourers of different regions and creeds there can, of course, be less risk of any general outburst amongst the mass of working

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people. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that in the case of Asiatic immigrants in these colonies, there is always more or less hazard of disturbance, arising probably from some complete misconception of the intentions of the Government or of their employers, or of some accidental jar upon their religious or social prejudices. Upon the other hand, it must be borne in mind of the *native* labouring people of these colonies, that they are too prone, in cases of imaginary or real injustice towards one of their fellows, to take part together under old impulses not difficult to understand. A very small European force, under firm and judicious guidance, will always be sufficient to remind these generally well disposed and well treated people, that the single danger they have to avoid is any violent interference with the due course of law and order. Their disposition to sympathise and act together in occasional instances is no more than a fugitive reminiscence of a past and vicious condition of things, rapidly wearing out under the spread of intelligence and that habitual exercise of individual right under individual responsibilities, which most effectually separates the good from the bad, the idle from the industrious, and the prudent from the rash—be they of what complexion they may.

I am familiar with Colonies in this situation and should be the last person to undervalue their strong claim to a due measure of countenance by Imperial force ; but I cannot think it is at all necessary or

right to afford it in the form of small detachments of the regular army, objectionable on every ground of just regard for the health of the troops, mischief to their efficiency, and unnecessary risk of military disaster in case of any sudden outbreak of hostilities with foreign powers; some of them, it may be, holding strong posts, in force, within a few hours steaming of colonies where they would find no more than weak British detachments and some amount of military stores in exposed positions.

THE GREAT COLONIES.

Adverting to the great colonial off-sets of this Empire with their vast domain and prodigious natural resource, and advancing so rapidly and yet so solidly in all those conditions which insure to communities an opportunity of winning a place in the history of human progress, it has long appeared to me, both on grounds of general policy and for the protection of their growing interests (in the contingency of foreign wars) that the mother country should be ready to discharge the duty and undertake a liberal share of the pains and expense of organising such local force as the local legislatures may see fit to raise, on the footing best suited to their *geographical situation and natural military advantages*.

PROPOSAL FOR COMMISSIONS FOR ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL FORCE.

In order to carry out these important objects

comprehensively, I have for many years believed that Her Majesty's Government, after previous communication with the local Governments, should send out to each group of those Colonies commissions, consisting of a person trained in high colonial office, an Officer of Engineers, and of the Navy, authorized to consult and concert with the local Governments on these points.

If the Commissioners should succeed in agreeing with the local Governments on some organization judged to be best suited to their requirements, it would remain for Her Majesty's Government to furnish such supplies of arms and scientific instruction as might be necessary to establish the force on a solid and expansive basis.

In some of these Colonies the organisation might, I think, very beneficially embrace academies of military and naval instruction to be maintained partly by Her Majesty's Government and partly at the charge of the local Government, on the condition that the appointment of the officers at the head of these Military Academies and of the leading preceptors should be in Her Majesty's Government; so as to ensure a large field of choice and uniformity of system between the Imperial and Colonial services.

I also think (in all cases of local force established by concert between Her Majesty's Government and the local authorities) that the Crown should consent to appoint and pay the officer in command of the

force, with an adequate general staff, as well as the commanding officers of Engineer, Artillery, Marine, or Naval force, which might form part of the local organization: and it seems to me that the commissions of all the officers should be under the Sign manual, so that if the force or any part of it (with the consent of the local legislature) should volunteer, in any pressure of war, to serve *beyond* the limits of the colony it would fall under the regular military system of the Empire pending such service. It would remain for the local legislatures to enact such laws as they might deem necessary for maintaining discipline amongst the local force called out for training or for actual service *within* the limits of their jurisdiction.

In this way Her Majesty's Government and the local authorities would co-operate in the formation of the nuclei of force of all arms best suited to the defensive requirements and natural military resources of those great regions, affiliated, if I may so speak, in the Imperial array, imbued with the same dutiful devotion to the service to which they belonged, and with the same spirited readiness to adopt all the improvements in armament, equipment and movement which science may devise and the enlarged opportunities of experiments at home should prove to be sound and effective.

Whether all the positions abroad, *actually* in the military occupation of the *regular* force of the Empire, fall within the conditions of the soundest military

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policy, is a consideration for statesmen on full examination of all the circumstances and liabilities which must govern such dispositions, but I may mention some impressions on that subject which have fixed themselves in my mind in a long foreign service.

INDIA.

India is, of course, a separate case. A native population, six times larger than that of the United Kingdom, inhabiting conquered or subject regions of ten times that area, at 12,000 miles distance from these shores, can only be restrained by a powerful European army. But with the vast trade and outlying possessions of this empire scattered over the whole globe and having no more at the centre than comparatively considered a small population, however high in courage, powerful in arts, and rich in capital, it has long appeared to me that what I believe to be the only sound rule of military occupation for a great maritime power under such circumstances of dispersed interests, may be partially applied to the case of India with much advantage.

Recent events have confirmed me in the persuasion that it is essential to a sound military system for India and all our outlying posts, that it should comprise a squadron of at least eight iron troop ships, constructed and fitted in all respects in the most effective manner for speed and capable of transporting 2000 men each, from Milford to the Cape of Good Hope within twenty-one days; four of those ships to be constantly stationed at the Cape with

coals on board, and otherwise in an advanced state of readiness. The other portion of this squadron of troop ships might of course be employed in the general transport service of the empire, within easy distances of England, so that the ships would always be available at a very short notice in case of any pressure for troops in India.

If Mr. Scott Russell were asked (and I mention his name because I am not aware that there can be any higher authority in such questions) whether he could produce a ship having such capacity for the conveyance of troops to the Cape of Good Hope in the required time (three weeks) within 5800 tons of burthen, leaving all the conditions of lines, sufficient solidity of construction, and propulsion to be proposed by him, I have a belief that he would answer affirmatively. With these first rate means of transport and a reserve division of 10,000 trained European troops at the Cape and St. Helena, at the charge of *the Indian revenue and at the constant disposal of the Indian Government*, it is my opinion that the European strength actually in those trying regions might be considerably reduced, not merely without hazard to the security of India, but on the contrary, with much increase to it.

Within seven weeks from the time that the Governor General's despatches demanding relief left India for the Cape and England, he would be receiving the reserve from the Cape and St. Helena, and the ships from England with reinforcements to

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replace the Cape and St. Helena reserve would be well on to their destination; indeed, if the telegraph were in a forward state, they might have arrived there. If further relief were necessary in India, these ships could go on from the Cape as soon as they had coaled; and therefore, even under present conditions of intelligence from India to England, within eighty days from the date that the Governor General had applied for reinforcements, it would be perfectly practicable with these means of transport and arrangement to have landed upwards of 15,000 European troops in India, one half of which strength would have arrived in a high state of health and efficiency *within half that time.*

The expense of the depôts in England of all the European corps serving in India is, I believe, a charge upon the Indian revenue, but I think it would be a more equitable and sounder arrangement in all respects, that India should be relieved of the expense of maintaining depôts consisting mainly of young and raw troops, at 12,000 miles from the field of active operations, and charged instead with the expense of a reserve-force of *thoroughly trained European troops, with a full proportion of well practised artillery*, posted in healthy cantonments, within a few weeks steaming from the points where the swift arrival of effective reinforcements in some moment of emergency could not fail to prove of great if not decisive importance.

Bearing in mind the strength of population in

this kingdom and the high and increasing rate of wage, in the labouring occupations of the people, it is a grave consideration whether we can meet all the other usual and growing demands on those sources of strength from which the military force must be drawn, maintaining at the same time a great European army in such a climate as India at the necessary standard of age, physical strength, and high military efficiency.

I believe that the only mode of accomplishing those purposes in a steady way, must be sought for in a combination of *the most rapid and effective means of maritime transport which science and skill can devise*, and judicious disposition of part of the force at, comparatively considered, healthful cantonments *on the single reliable road to India*. If that state of things had obtained at the Cape and St. Helena, and those means of transport had existed there when the late mutiny broke out, it would probably have been crushed within three months from the time it declared itself, at an immense saving of precious life and of an enormous expense which must press formidably upon India for many years to come.

Let it be added to these reflections that if any sudden rupture should occur in Europe, it is greatly to be hoped such an event may find the naval positions at the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and St. Helena in a state of perfect preparation.

They could not fall into the hands of a vigorous enemy for even a few months without disastrous con-

sequences to all the immense British interests, political, commercial, and fiscal, dependent upon our steady maritime ascendancy throughout all the seas and coasts south and east of those positions.

In the altered conditions of naval warfare, blockade of the enemy's military ports is impossible, and the security of our outlying dependencies and scattered trade rests entirely on our own means to strike vigorous blows in the right directions as swiftly as possible after the breaking out of hostilities.

Adverting to the rapid extension of the telegraph to the shores of Eastern Asia across regions beyond our control, and weighing some other circumstances connected with that subject, it seems too probable that formidable loss must be encountered within a few weeks of a rupture (premeditated it may well be whilst we were led to hope for peaceful results) unless such an event finds us in steady strength at the great outlying naval posts of the empire, with well devised plans and means of movement and assembly from and between those depôts.

Most judicious distribution of our own depôts of coal and steady security and very effective organization at these points, so that we may be able to make powerful and swift descents on the enemy's depôts of coal on the outbreak of hostilities, appears to me to be a maxim of our military policy, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated. These posts form part of the *naval strength of the empire*, and several

of them, so far as their military system is concerned, should, I believe, be placed under the direct authority of the Admiralty—Bermuda, St. Helena, and Mauritius, for example.

CANADA.

In my examination before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Military Colonial Expenditure (1861), a question was put to me about the military occupation of Canada. I replied that I had never comprehended the object of it. If the subject had been pursued, I should have said that so far as I understood our relations with those regions and people such an occupation appeared to me to be useless in peace and dangerous in war. We have no facilities for waging a defensive war, with the small regular army of this country, broken up into little detachments along the immense frontier extending between the United States and Canada, and shut out from communication with Europe, for several months of the year, by the only reliable high road open to us in case of war, that is, the River Saint Lawrence.

But there are other safe and very powerful means of making the strength of this empire felt for the protection of the Canadian frontier, so long as the three millions of people settled in the North American provinces are content to live under the British flag. Whilst we retain the supremacy at sea, and can assemble in powerful force at the

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pit's mouth of the best steaming coal in the shores of America, in noble harbours open all the year round, there need be no apprehension for the safety of the Canadian frontier. The retribution would be felt to be too certain, prompt, and dreadful. If the reinforcements recently dispatched to North America had found a state of hostilities existing on their arrival (and they might have done so, for Congress was in Session) there would, of course, have been no attempt to move troops along a snow road in small detachments of 150 and 200 men, but no person competent to speak to such a point would consider that Canada was in greater peril from the want of these troops arriving, if they ever arrived, in detachments of that strength. On the supposition that hostilities had broken out or were imminent when the reinforcements were arriving from Europe, the force would have been concentrated at Halifax, and there could be no better position for its prompt and powerful action.

If we are to defend Canada and the other North American provinces, and I am one of those who deem it our bounden duty to do so at all extremities *as long as those people desire to maintain their connection with us*, we must at least be free to do so with our blood and treasure, *upon principles of military policy suited to their military means*. It would be shameful to expose the Queen's arms to miscarriage and these very people to great disasters, by a course of proceeding not warranted on

any sound grounds of military reasoning. The best lesson we can ever teach the people of Canada, the best example we can show them, and the best assistance we can afford them, will be steadfastly to pursue that plan of military operation for which we are very powerfully competent and carefully to avoid the separation of our regular troops from steady communication with our fleets and shores in pretexts of local convenience. Those are the only principles on which we could ever bring a war with the United States or any other Power, to a speedy and triumphant conclusion.

I have already expressed my own opinion that the mother country is bound by every consideration of sound policy, liberally to assist Colonial communities with responsible Governments desiring to organise force, for their defence or for the occupation in peace of such positions as the local Legislature may see fit to fortify. But I think they should *in all cases be left to raise, pay, and train their own troops*, for it is surely the highest duty of any self-respecting people with great and growing interests, to provide adequately for their own defence. Statesmen will determine whether it is just to deprive them of all motive to do so, steadfastly and intelligently, at a burthensome cost to the people of England, and in violation of principles of military policy necessary for the security of the whole empire.

C. E.

LONDON, FEB. 12, 1862.

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